

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON THE CAUSES OF ACTS OF TERRORISM IN JOS NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nowadays, terrorism is one of the biggest problems confronting the world. Terrorism and insecurity pose significant global concerns and Nigeria has been bedeviled by a number of security challenges, the most prominent being that of Boko Haram. Worldwide, terrorism continues to become more concentrated, with 57 countries reporting a terror attack in 2022, compared to 59 in 2021 and 74 in 2015 when terrorism reached its peak. Terrorism was most concentrated in the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa, where 65 per cent of attacks in the region took place in the ten countries in the region. In Nigeria, the impact of terrorism, however, witnessed a temporal decline; with total deaths falling by 23 per cent, decreasing from 497 in 2021 to 385 in 2022. This study assessed public perception on the causes of acts of terrorism in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. In Jos North, a combination of factors-economic, political and identity - has instigated violence over the years, producing segregation in the city mainly along ethnic lines. The sample for this study is made up of four hundred and twenty (420) respondents drawn from a total population of 917,000, using a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The study sample was determined using the sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan. The survey gathered responses from 403 out of 420, with a response rate of 96%. Data were analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. The study was guided by the social structure and anomie theory. It was found from this study that respondents attributed the causes of acts of terrorism in the study area to political marginalization, injustice, poverty, unemployment, and negative religious teaching. The consequences of terrorism are significant and have wide-ranging impacts on the community by way of economic and social disruption. In light of the above findings, the study recommends the need to address political marginalization through inclusive governance, tackling injustice through fair legal systems, implementing policies to mitigate poverty, reduce unemployment and promote positive teachings to counteract negative influences. Additionally, there is the need to encourage community engagement and education, to mitigate the root causes of terrorism.

Key words: Boko Haram; Injustice; Political Marginalization; Poverty; Terrorism.

Introduction

Terrorism is regarded as a global phenomenon. Virtually all nations of the world are bedeviled by it. The 2014 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (Asongu, Tchamyou & Minkoua 2017) has shown that terrorist activities have increased significantly after the 2011 Arab Spring. The U.N Security Committee said that Iraq as well as Syria together, accounted for much more than twenty thousand overseas troops, who went there to battle largely in support of the Islamic States of Iraq and Syria, ISIS, (Associated Press, 2015). The influential Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) currently controls more than a third and a half of the regions of Iraq and Syria.

The African region has also been suffering an upwelling in extremist actions. Nigeria has had its own share terrorism due to activities of the *Boko Haram* (BH) terrorist group. Boko Haram has changed from a non-violent sect with its abhorrence of Western philosophy and morals to a destructive group that has become a threat to both Nigeria and the West African sub-region. The sect has been involved in a series of terrorist acts mainly in northern Nigeria, among which include the kidnapping of 276 girls from a secondary staying school in Chibok, a town in Borno State on 14 April 2014 (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). There are more recent data on BH activities in Nigeria. Cite more of such current examples. The year 2014 is almost 10 years ago!!

Since 1999, when Nigeria had a shift from military dictatorship to democracy, there has been a resurgence of violent movements across all the geo-political zones of the country, Plateau state inclusive. The 2001 Jos crisis, which lasted a week and resulted in approximately 1000 deaths, was fueled by economic, political, and religious tensions. The conflict was sparked by various factors, including disputes over natural resources (Sani, 2007) and political appointments. The appointment of a non-indigene as the coordinator and chairman of the Jos North Monitoring Committee of the National Poverty Eradication Programme, as well as local conflicts over farmland and resource harvesting, contributed to the escalating tensions. The crisis culminated in a tragic event triggered by a dispute over passage through a barricaded road by a Christian woman while Muslim were preparing for their Friday Juma'at Prayer at the Congo-Russia area (Nkanga, 2011), leading to widespread violence and significant loss of lives and property. The crisis in Jos was a complex interplay of economic, political, and religious factors, which ultimately had devastating consequences for the region (Nkanga, 2011).

In 2004, the Jos crisis, which lasted from February to May, was driven by economic factors and involved clashes between Muslim herders and Christian farmers over land and cattle. The conflict resulted in over 1000 deaths, the internal displacement of about 258,000 people, and the destruction of property worth billions of naira (Global IDP Project, 2005; Osaghae and Suberu, 2005; Ostien, 2009; Nkanga, 2011). As a response to this crisis, the Plateau Peace Conference of 2004 was convened during the period of emergency rule to seek a resolution.

The November 2008 Jos crisis was attributed to political, religious, and economic factors (Gwamna and Amango, 2010). The crisis began after a state-wide local government council election, and it was while awaiting the announcement of results that trouble broke out at the collation center, which had been moved to Kabong outside the headquarters of Jos North local government council. The crisis lasted for four days, during which several lives and property were lost (Gwamna and Amango, 2010).

The January 17, 2010 Jos crisis began two weeks after the Abisoye Presidential Committee started sitting at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPS) in Kuru, Jos. The immediate causes of the crisis were attributed to three versions: the reconstruction of a demolished house, an attack on a Catholic church, and a minor argument during a local football match. These isolated disagreements in the Nasarawa area triggered a major crisis in Jos, resulting in an

estimated 326-362 casualties, 150 dead bodies pulled from a village well at Kuru Karama, and 8000 refugees in the Toro local government area of Bauchi (The Nation, Feb. 6, 2010:51). As a result, a presidential committee co-chaired by Chief Solomon Lar and Alhaji Yahaya Kwande was set up to investigate the causes of the crisis and provide solutions to prevent future occurrences. The Christmas Eve bombings by Islamic extremists further fueled violence, resulting in the deaths of more than 200 people in Plateau State. This study examines public perception on the causes of acts of terrorism in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Statement of the Problem

Terrorism continues to pose a significant threat to the security and well-being of communities across Nigeria, including the Jos North Local Government Area (LGA) in Plateau State. The prevalence of acts of terrorism in this region has not only led to loss of lives and property but has also deeply impacted the social fabric of the region as well as its safety and security.

Also, terrorists' activities have become serious security problems in Nigeria as many lives and assets valued at billions of Naira have been lost to the numerous terrorist attacks in the country. Since 2010, *Boko Haram* terrorists have launched several assaults in the northern part of Nigeria. Multiple explosive attacks have been carried out in many cities, towns and villages across Nigeria. A twin explosive blast murdered more than thirty individuals in the Terminus area of Jos metropolis, Plateau State, where similar twin blasts killed over 100 people on May 20, 2014 (Shittu, 2014).

The problem of acts of terrorism in Jos North, Nigeria, is multifaceted and has been influenced by various factors, including economic pressures, inter-communal violence, and the activities of extremist groups such as *Boko Haram*. The region has experienced an increase in population, leading to economic strains and the scarcity of resources, which have contributed to social tensions and conflict. Additionally, the rise of *Boko Haram*, particularly in Northeast Nigeria, has had a significant impact on the security situation in the country, leading to widespread violence and mass atrocities. The interplay of ethnic, religious, and political divisions has also been a contributing factor to the deadly clashes in the region, further exacerbating the security challenges. The prolonged conflict and the government's response to *Boko Haram*'s insurgency have resulted in tens of thousands of casualties and a humanitarian emergency in the affected areas.

Despite numerous efforts by the government and security agencies to combat terrorism, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of how the local populace in Jos North LGA perceives and responds to this menace. Understanding public perception on acts of terrorism is vital for devising effective counter-terrorism strategies and fostering community resilience. This is the focus of this study.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The study assesses public perception on the causes of acts of terrorism in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

The specific objectives are to:

- (a) Determine the level of public awareness of the causes of acts of terrorism in the study area.
- (b) Identify the perceived causes of acts of terrorism in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.
- (c) Identify the perpetrators of acts of terrorism in the study area.

Research Questions:

- (a) What is the level of public awareness of the causes of acts of terrorism in the study area?
- (b) What are the perceived causes of acts of terrorism in Jos North Local Government area of Plateau State?
- (c) Who are the perpetrators of acts of terrorism in the study area?

Literature Review

Global Overview of Terrorism

The Global Terrorism Index (IEP, 2023), noted that the number of deaths from terrorism in 2022, decreased by 9% to 6,701 deaths, and the number of attacks decreased by almost 28% from 5,463 in 2021 to 3,955 in 2022. Afghanistan remained the country most impacted by terrorism for the fourth consecutive year, despite attacks and deaths falling by 75% and 58% respectively. The deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2022 were the Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates, followed by al-Shabaab, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

Terrorism-related deaths attributed to the ISIS and its affiliate groups declined by 16%, but deaths attributed to unknown jihadists in the countries where Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) operates increased by 17 times since 2017 to 1,766 terrorism deaths. The lethality rate of terrorist attacks increased in 2022, killing on average 1.7 people per attack compared to 1.3 deaths per attack in 2021. Violent conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism, with over 88% of attacks and 98% of terrorism deaths in 2022 taking place in countries in conflict (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

The Sahel region in sub-Saharan Africa has become the center of terrorism, accounting for a larger number of terrorism deaths in 2022 than both South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa combined. In 2022, deaths in the Sahel constituted 43% of the global total, a significant increase from just 1% in 2007. Burkina Faso and Mali are particularly concerning, as they accounted for 73% of terrorism deaths in the Sahel in 2022 and 52% of all deaths from terrorism in sub-Saharan Africa. Both countries experienced substantial increases in terrorism, with deaths in Burkina Faso rising by 50% to 1,135 and in Mali by 56% to 944 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). The latest report by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2023) shows that the number of people killed per attack also increased by 48% from 2021 with most attacks in these countries attributed to unknown jihadists, although both IS and JNIM operate in these areas. The escalation in violence in Burkina Faso has spread to neighboring countries, with Togo and Benin recording their highest GTI scores on record.

The increase in terrorism in the Sahel has been dramatic, rising by over 2,000% in the last 15 years. The underlying drivers are complex and systemic, including poor water utilization, lack of food, ethnic polarization, strong population growth, external interventions, geopolitical competition, pastoral conflict, the growth of transnational Salafi-Islam ideology, and weak governments. Additionally, most of the terrorist activity occurs along borders where government control is weakest (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

In 2022, the Sahel region in sub-Saharan Africa experienced the largest deterioration in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) score, while North America recorded the largest improvement. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 60% of all terrorism deaths globally, with an 8% increase in terrorism deaths compared to 2021. Four of the ten countries with the largest deteriorations in GTI score are located in sub-Saharan Africa: Togo, Djibouti, Central African Republic, and Benin (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region recorded a 32%

decrease in terrorism deaths, with only 791 deaths in 2022, the lowest number since 2013. Attacks in the MENA region almost halved, from 1,331 in 2021 to 695 in 2022 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

South Asia remains the region with the worst average GTI score in 2022, recording 1,354 deaths from terrorism, a 30% decrease compared to the previous year; however, if the improvement in Afghanistan was excluded, terrorism deaths would have increased by 71%. In Afghanistan, both the Khorasan chapter of IS and the emerging National Resistance Front (NRF) pose a serious threat. Afghanistan and Pakistan remain amongst the ten countries most affected by terrorism in 2022, with deaths in Pakistan rising significantly to 643, a 120% increase from 292 deaths in 2021. The BLA were responsible for a third of these deaths in Pakistan, a nine-fold increase from the prior year, making it the fastest-growing terrorist group in the world (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

In the West, the number of attacks continues to fall, with successive falls each year since 2017. However, the number of deaths more than doubled, albeit from a low base; from nine deaths in 2021 to 19 in 2022, with 11 of these occurring in the US. This was the first increase in terrorism deaths in the West since 2019 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

In Europe, Islamist extremists carried out two attacks in 2022. Attacks in the US remained low, with only eight recorded in 2022. None were attributed to any known terrorist group (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). The UK recorded only four attacks and no deaths this year, the first year since 2014 that no deaths have been recorded; while Germany recorded the lowest number of attacks since 2015. Ideologically motivated terrorism continues to be the most common type of terrorism in the West, with religiously-motivated terrorism declining by 95% since its peak in 2016 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

Terrorism in Nigeria

There had been numerous civil disturbances that led to struggles between influential establishments and some segments of the Nigerian society. In the pre-colonial era, there were some important events that had the propensity to lead to terror. For example, in the aftermath of Nigeria's independence, enormous security challenges manifested, which posed a great threat to the government. These included the Tiv unrest in Benue State, the Agbekoya Levy, the Isaac Boro rebellion in the Delta Niger region (Mohammed, 2003). Ovaga (2012) traced the sources of security problems in Nigeria to military incursion into politics. Shea (2003) also perceived the 1966 overthrow of government against the First Nigerian Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, deaths of key ministers, the Premier of Northern Region and several other well-known political party and army rulers as adding to the causes of security challenges in Nigeria.

The impact of terrorism in Nigeria has decreased, with a 23% reduction in total deaths, dropping from 497 in 2021 to 385 in 2022 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023, p. 28). The number of terrorist attacks also significantly decreased, with 120 incidents in 2022 compared to 214 in 2021, marking the lowest number of attacks and deaths since 2011. The military became the most targeted group in 2022, with military personnel being the focus in a quarter of all attacks, followed by civilians at 24% and law enforcement at 18%. Despite this, half of all terrorism deaths in Nigeria in 2022 were civilians (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023, p. 28).

The ISWA remained the deadliest terrorist group in Nigeria for the third consecutive year, with an increased lethality rate. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) recorded its deadliest year in 2022, while Boko Haram attacks almost halved. The conflict between the ISWA and Boko Haram continued, with the ISWA becoming significantly stronger. Borno State experienced a

substantial improvement in terrorism, with a decrease in terrorism-related deaths and attacks. However, it remains the hardest-hit region in Nigeria, accounting for 60% of all terror-related deaths in 2022 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023, p. 28).

The deadliest terror attack of the year occurred in Borno State, attributed to the ISWA. The conflict between ISWA and Boko Haram, along with counter-terrorism efforts, has significantly weakened Boko Haram, allowing ISWA to expand its area of activity in northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad region (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023, p. 28).

Theoretical Framework

This study employed the social structure and anomie theory to analyze the relationship between socioeconomic factors and criminal behavior in urban communities. The Social structure theory posits that the organization of society, including its economic and social arrangements, influences individual behavior and opportunities for success or deviance (Merton, 1938). The Anomie theory, which is an extension of social structure theory, suggests that when societal norms and values are weakened or undermined, individuals experience a sense of normlessness or confusion, leading to increased likelihood of deviant behavior (Durkheim, 1897).

The social structure perspective emphasizes the importance of social institutions such as family, education, and employment in shaping individuals' life chances and opportunities. According to this perspective, individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds may face limited access to legitimate means of achieving success, such as education and stable employment, increasing their likelihood of engaging in criminal activities as an alternative means of achieving their goals (Sampson & Laub, 1993). On its part, the Anomie theory further enunciates how social and economic disorganization can lead to heightened levels of deviance and criminal behavior. When individuals perceive a disconnection between their aspirations and the means available to achieve them, they may experience feelings of strain and frustration, contributing to the breakdown of social norms and an increase in criminal behavior (Merton, 1938). In economically disadvantaged urban communities, such as the Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State as well as similar sections of Nigeria, where opportunities for legitimate success are scarce and social cohesion is weak, individuals may turn to illicit activities such as acts of terrorism like kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, etc., as a means of attaining their desired goals.

Methodology

The study area is Jos North, situated within the metropolitan area of Jos, Plateau State capital. Jos North Local Government was created in 1975. It is a heterogeneous settlement with over 1,400 of its populaces coming from various parts of Nigeria. People of different cultural backgrounds populate Jos North, but the five major ethnic groups are: Birom, Jarawa, Amfir, Anakuta and Hausa/Fulani. There are also minority tribes in Jos north. The people occupy a portion of the high plains of Northern Nigeria, 752.6 feet above sea level and some 950 km from the coast at 11°04' N, 7°42' E.

The research adopted the survey research design. This is appropriate since it agrees with the use of a sample from a study population that is representative enough of the whole population. The research is descriptive in that it utilized respondents' views to provide explanations for acts of terrorism in the study area.

The target population for this research comprised all people (both men and women), village heads, government officials, members of Civil Society Organizations and respondents from

political wards in Jos North, Plateau State. Jos North has a projected population of 643,200 as at 2022, based on the figure of 437,217 of the 2006 population exercise (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2022).

The sample used for this study is four hundred and twenty (420). The sample size was determined by the use of the sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). To achieve a representative sample of 420 respondents (2 village heads, 14 persons for FGDs, 4 key informant from Civil Society Organization and 405 Respondents from 14 political wards, namely; Abba Na Shehu, Ali Kazaure, Garba Daho, Gangare, Ibrahim Katsina, Jenta Adamu, Jenta Apata, Jos Jarawa, Naraguta 'A', Naraguta 'B' Sarkin Arab, Tafawa Balewa, Tudun Wada-Kabong and Vanderpuye) for the study, a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed. The first step involved dividing the population of Jos North LGA into relevant strata based on political wards. Each stratum represents a distinct subgroup within the population. Random samples were then drawn independently from each stratum, ensuring that the sample includes participants from various political wards. The populations of samples were derived from the wards using proportionate sampling technique.

In addition to the stratified random sampling, some participants were included through convenience sampling. This technique was used to reach individuals who might not be easily accessible through other methods, such as community leaders, law enforcement personnel, and representatives from NGOs. While convenience sampling introduces potential bias, these participants' insights were considered valuable in understanding the local response to terrorism.

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative instruments of data collection. This means that questionnaire copies were administered to generate quantitative data from respondents, while Key Informant Interview (KII) guides and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to generate qualitative data from informants.

Primary and secondary data were collected from the respondents. Data were collected through questionnaire administration and interviews with the respondents. The adopted instruments of data collection are considered appropriate for the study because they allowed the researcher to get in-depth opinions from large respondents. Secondary data were collected from periodicals, books and reports.

For the KIIs, the researchers identified 4 members from Civil Society Organizations who have been in the study area for at least 10 years and have a certain level of information on the research topic and conducted semi-structured interviews with each of these KIs asking questions about public awareness of the causes of acts of terrorism, the perceived causes of acts of terrorism and the perpetrators of acts of terrorism in the study area in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. Each interview session lasted approximately one hour.

For the FGDs, the researchers identified 4 groups of people from each political ward and conducted one FGD with each group for approximately 2 hours.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The researchers used mixed method of data analysis. Mixed method was adopted for complementarity. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics such as tables, percentage and charts were used for the analysis. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.

Results and Discussions**Table 1:** Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	278	69.0
	Female	125	31.0
	Total	380	100.00
Age group	18-23	81	20.10
	24-28	72	17.90
	29-33	70	17.40
	34-38	96	23.80
	39-above	84	20.80
	Total	403	100.00
Educational level	Non-formal	10	2.50
	Primary	67	16.60
	Secondary	118	29.30
	Tertiary	208	51.60
	Total	403	100.00
Religion	Islam	277	69.00
	Christianity	85	21.00
	African traditional religion	41	10.00
	Total	403	100.00

Source: Field data (2023)

The researchers sampled a total of 420 respondent from which 403 (96%) of the respondents responded while 17 (4%) did not respond. The response rate was therefore significant enough to analyze the data on the subject of the study. The response rate agrees with the view of Nachimias (1992), who argued that any response rate above 80% is excellent for analysis in a descriptive research study.

From table 1, males were the higher gender that responded with 278 (69%) and female respondents accounted for the remaining 125 (31%). This indicates that men were dominant within

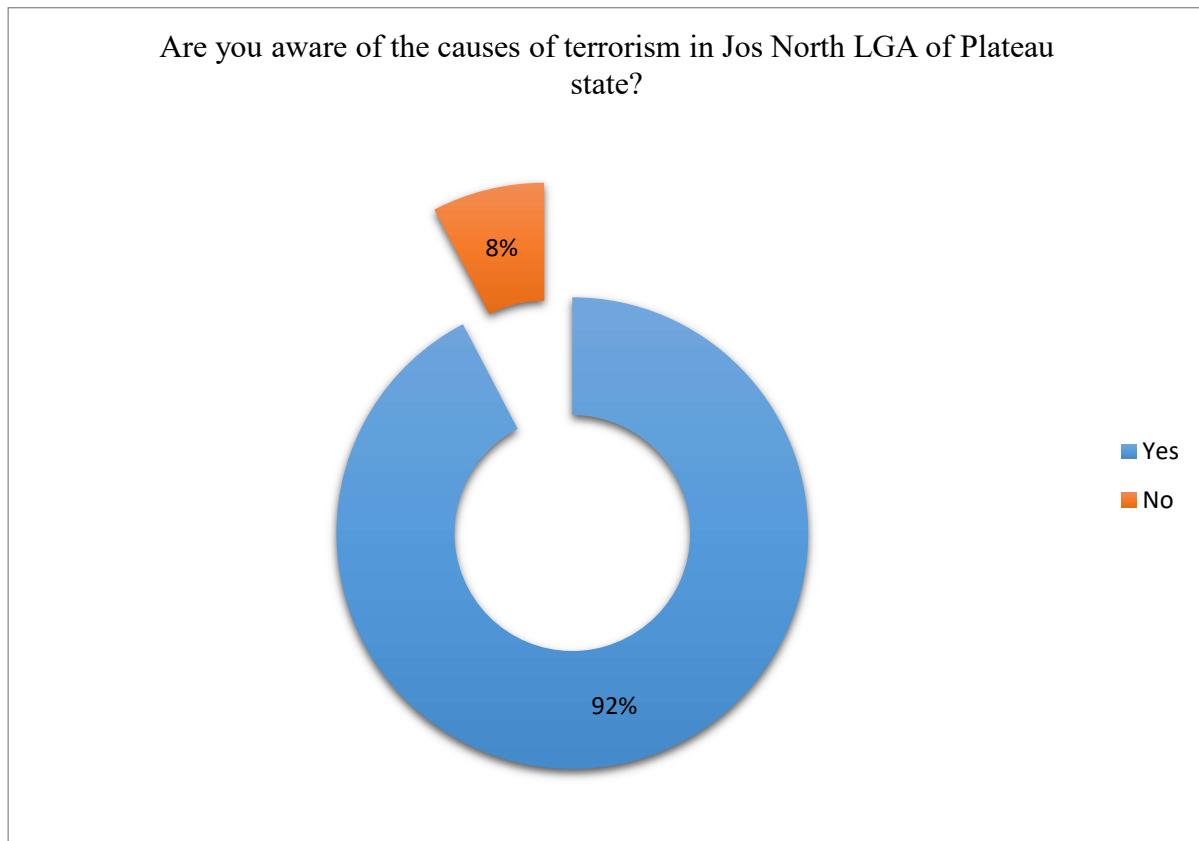
the study area. The age of the respondents ranges from 18-23 to 39-above. It was found from the study that majority of the respondents are in the age range of 34-38 with 96 (24%) respondents followed by 39-above, with 84 (21%) respondents. Those in the age range of 18-23 were 81 (20%), while those in the age range of 24-28 were 72 (18%) and the least, are in the age range of 29-33 representing 70 (17%).

For the level of education, data in the table indicated that majority of the respondents studied up to tertiary institution level, 208 (51.6%), followed by secondary school, at 118 (29.3%), 67 (16.6%) respondents attained primary education and the least, accounting for 2.5% (10) respondents had no formal education.

For the religion, 277 (69%) of respondents are Muslims, 85 (21%) are Christians and 41 (10%) practice African traditional religion. The high percentage of Muslim respondents may be a reflection of the dominant religious group in Jos North LGA.

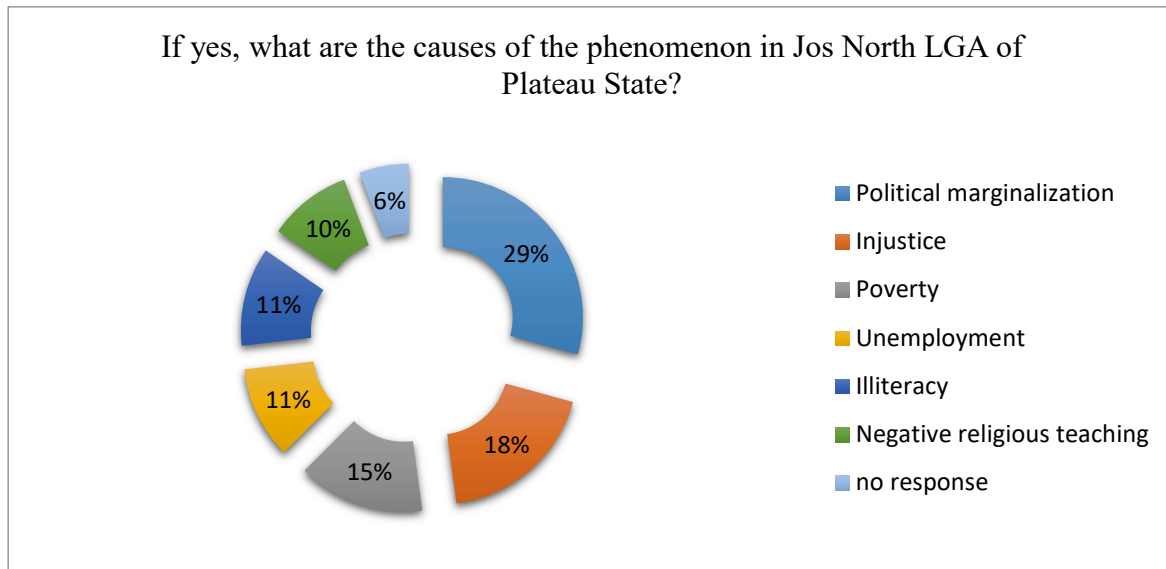
Public Perception on the Causes of acts of Terrorism in Jos North LGA of Plateau State

Figure 1: Public Awareness of the causes of terrorism in the study area



Source: Field Data (2023)

Figure 1 revealed the responses to the question about awareness of the causes of acts of terrorism in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria. A total of 372 or (92%) of the respondents were aware of the causes of terrorism while the remaining 31 (8%) of respondents were not. These indicates that the majority of respondents were aware of the factors or reasons for acts of terrorism in the study area. The awareness level suggests that the issue of terrorism is well-known and has likely attracted significant attention and concern among the local population.

Figure 2: Perceived causes of terrorism in the study area

Source: Field Data (2023)

From figure 2, the responses to the question about the perceived causes of terrorist attacks in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria showed that 118 (29%) of respondents identified political marginalization, 75 (18%) of respondents cited injustice, 59 (15%) of respondents blamed it on poverty, 43 (11%) of respondents implicated unemployment, 46 (11%) of respondents settled for illiteracy, while 39 (10%) of respondents attributed it to negative religious teaching. 23 (6%) of respondents did not respond. These findings provide insights into how the respondents perceived the underlying causes of terrorist attacks in the study area.

The distribution of responses indicates that respondents attribute terrorism to a mixed bag of political, socioeconomic, and religious factors. The high percentage of respondents mentioning political marginalization and injustice as causes suggests that grievances related to governance and social equity are significant factors influencing terrorism perceptions. The acknowledgment of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy as potential causes underscores the importance of addressing economic and educational disparities in countering extremist ideologies.

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In a KII interview a respondent lamented as follows:

In my opinion, the causes of terrorist attacks in our area are multifaceted and complex. One of the significant factors contributing to this issue is poverty. Many individuals in our community struggle to meet their basic needs, which can create feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Unfortunately, some extremist groups exploit these vulnerable circumstances, offering a false sense of purpose and belonging in exchange for their involvement in violent activities.

Moreover, the high unemployment rate in our region exacerbates the situation. Lack of job opportunities can lead to frustration and disillusionment among the youth, making them susceptible to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups promising a sense of purpose and income.

Injustice is another crucial factor that plays a role in fueling terrorism. Perceived or actual injustices, such as unfair treatment by authorities or discrimination based on religion or ethnicity, can lead to feelings of resentment and anger, pushing some individuals towards extremist ideologies as a means of seeking revenge or retribution.

Additionally, negative religious beliefs or misinterpretation of religious teachings can be exploited by extremist groups to justify their violent actions. These groups often manipulate religious ideologies to attract followers and create a distorted sense of religious duty or superiority, which further contributes to the rise of terrorism.

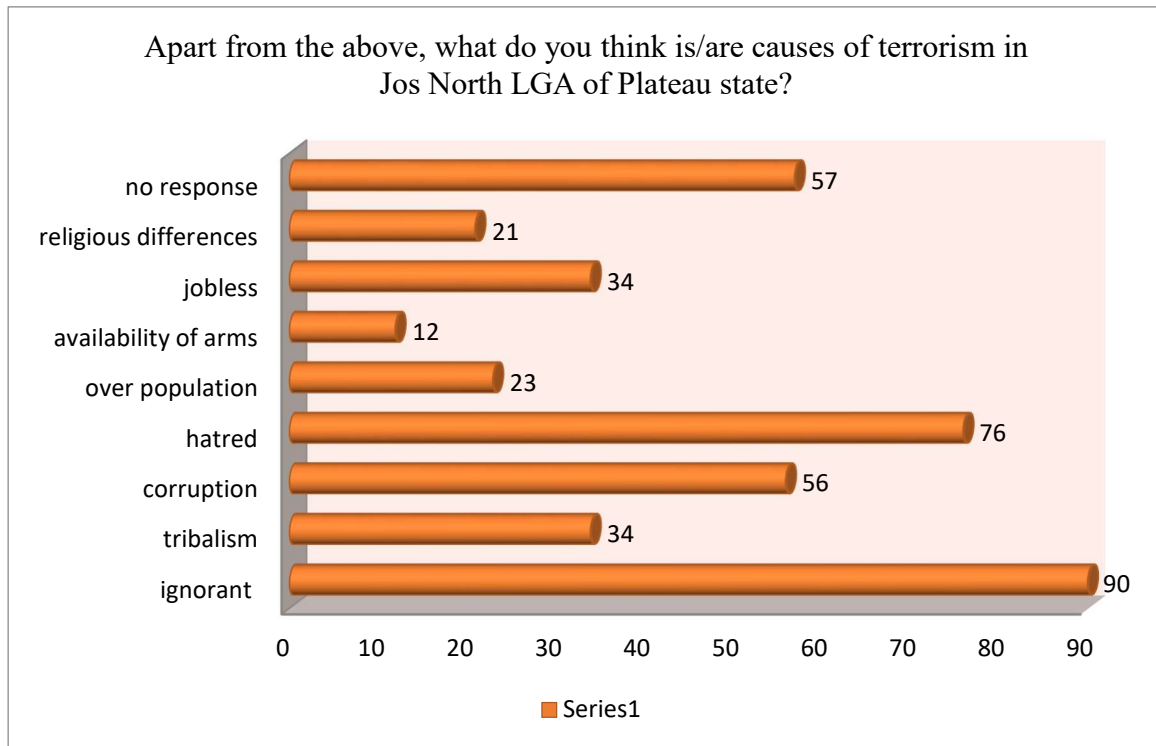
Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on poverty alleviation, job creation, promoting social justice, and fostering interfaith dialogues to challenge and correct the misinterpretation of religious beliefs. Combining these efforts can help to create a more inclusive and stable society, thereby reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies and ultimately mitigating the threat of terrorist attacks in our area (Naraguta, 08/08/2023,).

Another KII emphasized the role of perceived or actual injustices, unfair treatment, and discrimination in fueling terrorism, particularly in the context of inter-communal violence in Nigeria.

During FGD sessions in Naraguta B, the informants highlighted the implications of socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and limited education as contributing to the risk of potential recruitment into terrorism, particularly in the northern region of Nigeria.

Additionally, during FGDs in Tafawa Balewa, the respondents emphasized that exploitation of negative religious beliefs by extremist groups is supported by a report on the ethnic, political, and religious factors contributing to deadly clashes in the study area. This report highlights the manipulation of religious ideologies by extremist groups to justify their actions, which resonates with the respondent's viewpoint.

Adesoji *et al.* (2016) posit that it is a common belief that religious tension and religious fundamentalism cause terrorism. There is empirical evidence to support this argument with respect to Boko Haram; religion plays a vital role in their discourse. The group holds extreme religious ideology, which they use as the basis to commit their heinous crimes (Adesoji *et al.*, 2016). Vivian (2018) cited in Oladimeji (2019), submitted that a huge gap between the country's government and its people is another cause of terrorism in Nigeria. Quite often, people do not seem to be heard by government officials. While some manage to deal with this in a civilized manner, others take to arms and use fear as their instrument of getting what they want from the country.

Figure 3: Other perceived causes of terrorism in the study area

Source: Field Data (2023)

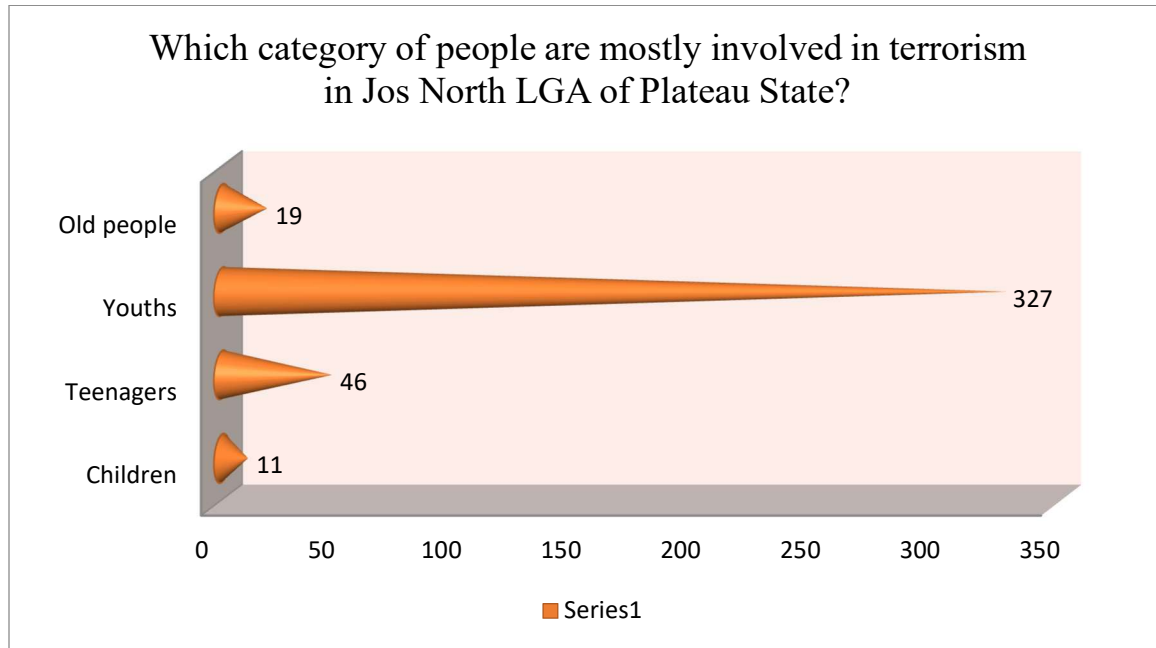
Figure 3 shows additional responses to the question about the perceived causes of terrorism in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria. 90 (22%) respondents went for ignorance, 34 (8%) respondents identified tribalism, and 56 (14%) respondents cited corruption, while 76 (19%) respondents blamed it on hatred. Another set of 23 (6%) respondents attributed it to overpopulation, 12 (3%) respondents hinged it on the availability of arms, 34 (8%) respondents cited joblessness, and 21 (5%) respondents identified religious differences while 57 (14%) respondents did not respond. These findings provide further insights into the various factors that respondents believe contribute to the causes of terrorism in the study area.

The high number of respondents who identified ignorance and tribalism as causes suggests that social factors, including lack of awareness and intergroup tensions, are perceived to play significant roles in fostering terrorism. Onuoha (2014) conducted a study based on interviews, focus groups and surveys in six states across Nigeria, highlighting socioeconomic factors. The study included data from traditional leaders, women leaders, religious leaders and focus group discussions with youth, women, faith groups and interviews with civil society organisations drawn from Bornu, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano Sokoto and Yobe states of Nigeria. Onuoha's (2014) study found among others, that issues of unemployment, poverty and weak family structures were instrumental drivers of radicalization into terrorism. In Kano State, 92% of the participants cited poverty and unemployment as key drivers of radicalization, while 83% of surveyed respondents in Kaduna consider them as important (Onuoha, 2014). Existing studies that include former Boko Haram members also highlighted the role of poverty in driving radicalization (Adelaja *et al.*, 2018).

The implication of these findings is that poverty, when left unaddressed, tends to breed frustration, leading to aggression. Within the synthesized studies, such aggression is manifested in

a diverse format, including joining terrorism. While poverty is construed as a breeding ground for terrorism, successive governments are perceived to have failed in their duty to provide the requisite basic welfare and living conditions for its populace. Such failure was identified in another study conducted by the Mercy Corps (2016) as a condition exploited towards recruiting youth desperate for business support.

Figure 4: Categories of people mostly involved in terrorism in the study area



Source: Field Data (2023)

Figure 4 shows the responses to the question about the category of people mostly involved in terrorism in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria. 11 (3%) respondents identified children, 46 (11%) respondents cited teenagers, 327 (81%) respondents went for youth and 19 (5%) respondents cited old people. These findings provide insights into the respondents' perceptions regarding the age groups that are perceived to be mostly involved in terrorism in the study area.

The significant number of respondents who identified youth as the category mostly involved in terrorism suggests that young people are perceived to be particularly susceptible to or associated with extremist activities. The finding is in line with that of Mercy Corps (2016) who found that youth desperate for business support can easily be recruited into terrorism related activities. The Corps further painted a scenario thus:

A male youth is running his business – struggling, perhaps and he is approached by a generous benefactor. Maybe he has seen this person around the community, or he has a mutual friend. The benefactor offers a business loan to the youth. Later, he comes back demanding repayment. If there is no money, the youth is forced to join Boko Haram or be killed (Mercy Corps, 2016).

The above extract highlights a perceived sense of initially positioning Boko Haram as the ‘good other’ that provides opportunities otherwise not easily obtained from the government. The quest for sustenance amid the ‘struggle’ to remain afloat in business seems central to the decision to accept loans from perceived benefactors regardless of the consequences of non-repayment. The implication of such findings is that access to required financial support perceived not to be readily

available by the government could trigger easy recruitment into terrorism. Such recruitment is made easy due to the exploitation of the needs of those struggling to survive.

Conclusion

The research sought to determine the perception of the public on the causes of terrorism in Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Respondents attributed the causes of terrorism to factors such as political marginalization, injustice, poverty, unemployment, and religious negative teaching.

Recommendations

In light of the above findings, there is need to address political marginalization through inclusive governance, tackling injustice through fair legal systems, implementing policies to alleviate poverty, reduce unemployment and promote positive teachings to counteract negative influences.

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